

# The Capitol Of Canada Record Club

Developed by Piers Hemmingsen.

## THE CAPITOL OF CANADA RECORD CLUB AND THE COLUMBIA RECORD CLUB

---

There were two major record clubs operating in Canada during the 1960s; The Capitol of Canada Record Club and The Columbia Record Club. Both companies offered a very generous sign-on promotion such as seven records for one cent provided the applicant agreed to purchase a number of records (eg six albums in the next twelve months). The **CAPITOL RECORD CLUB OF CANADA, LTD.** was incorporated in Canada on January 31, 1958.

Our family joined the Columbia Record Club Of Canada in December 1963 and our first order included The Ventures «Telstar» LP (Dolton), Johnny Cash «Ring Of Fire» LP (Columbia), «Tom Jones» Soundtrack LP (United Artists), «The Versatile Henri Mancini» (Liberty) as well as a number of classical releases on Columbia. We soon joined the Capitol Record Club (Canada) when we discovered that Beatles LPs could not be purchased through the Columbia Record Club (with the exception of A Hard Day's Night) !

Each club produced a glossy magazine on a monthly/bi-monthly basis that was roughly the size of a letter-sized sheet folded in half. These featured colour covers and included small-sized pictures of the current selections. As an example, a summer 1965 Capitol Of Canada Record Club magazine, «Keynotes», featured a full page colour shot of the Beatles «Something New» LP. This monthly/bi-monthly Capitol magazine was printed in Montreal by the Art Bell Press and then mailed out to members across Canada, coast to coast.

## CAPITOL RECORD CLUB OF CANADA 'KEYNOTES' MAGAZINES

---

note that on the rear page of each keynotes magazine there appears a 4-digit code that may be used as a guideline to the month and year that the magazine was issued - I have ten of these as well as three of the special Christmas catalogues):

CODE	MONTH	YEAR	COVER
4126	12	64	<i>Snowflake design cover</i> <i>(T-6068, Dave Clark Five «Bits &amp; Pieces LP» issued May 11, 1964 is featured selection)</i>
5016	01	65	<i>Winter scene cover</i> <i>(T-6075, The Esquires LP issued August 10, 1964 is featured selection)</i>
5056	05	65	<i>Girl with LP records on cover</i> <i>(T-6094 Mrs. Mills «It's Party Time», issued November 2, 1964 is featured selection)</i>

5076 07 65 Nancy Wilson on cover  
(back cover has the «Something New» Beatles LP and a featured selection is T-6115, Jack London & The Sparrows, issued April 12, 1965)

5116 11 65 Nat King Cole on cover  
(new Beatles VI is a selection of the month with Beatles cutting a cake and caption «Happy Birthday Beatles»)

6016 01 66 The Impressions are on the cover

6036 03 66 Dean Martin is on the cover  
(Beatles new Rubber Soul LP is featured selection – we ordered this !)

6056 05 66 Buck Owens is on the cover

6066 06 66 Peter And Gordon on the cover

6116 11 66 Girl in raincoat in the rain (close up from a Jonah Jones LP)  
(Beach Boys new Pet Sounds LP is a featured selection – we ordered this !)

6017 01 67 Jackie Gleason on the cover  
(article on Herman's Hermits)

6027 02 67 Al Martino on the cover  
(article on Sonny James)

6037 03 67 Dean Martin on cover  
(1 page on Revolver)

6047 04 67 Nat King Cole on cover  
(articles on Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison)

6057 05 67 Righteous Brothers on cover  
(Al Martino article)

6097 09 67 Eric Burdon on cover  
(same artwork as Hits Vol. 2)

6107 10 67 Nancy Wilson on cover  
(article on Lovin Spoonful)

6127 12 67 Righteous Brothers on cover  
(article on Ray Charles)

Special Christmas catalogues were also issued and these would have been sent out with the regular catalogues. I have three of these:

- **Christmas 1964** Holiday cover  
(includes Beach Boys Christmas LP as well as Rich Little T-6049 «Scrooge & The Stars» issued November 25, 1963)
- **Christmas 1965** Red cover with cartoon Santa Claus  
(includes Beach Boys Christmas LP again as well as Beatles 65)
- **Christmas 1967** Larger format with Santa Claus cover

A teenager would spend hours poring over the record club magazine to make sure that whatever was ordered was the best choice from the proliferation of LPs on offer. Remember, these were the days when artists competed head to head for a top ten LP position. It was not unusual for several Capitol artists to compete for the attention of a single teenager who could only afford one selection. As an example, Beatles LPs competed with the Beach Boys and Dave Clark Five LPs for the monthly selection.

The Capitol of Canada Record Club played an important role in the story of Capitol Records of Canada during the 1960s. Firstly, the population of Canada in the early 1960s was less than 20 million and was well dispersed across a huge geographic area. Few consumers had direct access to a record shop that would stock a wide variety of releases; this was a luxury that was confined to the major cities. Catalogue shopping had been popular with consumers in the rural areas who were used to catalogue shopping from Eatons, Hudsons Bay, Simpsons, Sears, and Canadian Tire. Products were shipped «second class» through the Royal Mail Of Canada. The «Book Of The Month Club» and «Readers Digest» were other popular forms of mail-order culture in Canada at that time.

Most record shops of the day stocked the top forty 45RPM records but LP albums were relatively expensive (eg \$4.20 for a MONO disc and \$5.20 for a STEREO disc circa 1964) and these record shops generally only stocked an LP upon its release and re-ordering was usually not done unless the LP was a huge seller.

Record selections were ordered from the catalogue via an 80-column (computer) punch-card and then the consumer waited for weeks until the disc arrived in a special record club mailing box. I well remember waiting for weeks at the end of 1966 for my copy of «Yesterday And Today» which would have been a featured selection in the club's magazine.

In general, the record club would have been responsible for making LPs accessible to the wider public and it would have been doubtful if Capitol in Canada would have been able to achieve the economies of scale in terms of sales to be in the position to afford the production and distribution of unique products such as the 6000 LP releases and 72000 45 RPM releases.

The Capitol Of Canada Record Club operated from a modern distribution centre at 41 Bertal Road (off Trethewey Drive, near the Black Creek) in Toronto's west end industrial area. The building still stands today and appears largely unchanged from the 1960s.

## CAPITOL RECORD CLUB ANECDOTES:

---

A few years ago, I bumped into a fellow who had worked as a student at the Capitol Of Canada Record Club warehouse during the holidays. When I mentioned The Beatles and their Canadian Capitol records, he immediately laughed as he recalled the chaos of getting the new Beatles albums out in the mail; he and his colleagues would physically jump on the piles of cardboard mailing boxes destined for club members so that they could get them into the already-jammed mail bags. Did this physically-intense activity damage the albums ? Not at all !

Secondly, Capitol albums ordered via the Capitol Record Club Of Canada would not have been issued with paper inner sleeves owing to the need to keep postage costs, which depended on overall package weight, down to a minimum.

Most albums for the teen market were mono. Few teens had the expensive stereo systems to play stereo records. As well, stereo records were priced \$1.00 more than their mono counterparts and few teens would have had the extra «free funds» for a stereo issue.

THIS IS THE LIST OF CANADIAN ALBUMS THAT WE ORDERED FROM THE CAPITOL AND COLUMBIA RECORD CLUB:

(\* = club election of the month):

Lp	<b>The Animals</b>	«On Tour»	(Quality / MGM)
Lp	<b>The Animals</b>	«Animal Tracks»	(Quality / MGM)
Lp	<b>The Animals</b>	«Greatest Hits»	(Quality / MGM)
Lp	<b>The Beach Boys</b>	«Summer Days And Summer Nights»	(Capitol stereo)
Lp	<b>*The Beach Boys</b>	«Pet Sounds»	(Capitol stereo)
Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Something New»	(Capitol mono)
Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Help»	(Capitol stereo)
LP	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Beatles VI»	(Capitol mono)
Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Rubber Soul»	(Capitol mono)
Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Yesterday And Today»	(Capitol mono) <i>* this took ages to get !</i>
Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Revolver»	(Capitol mono)
Lp	<b>The Rolling Stones</b>	«December's Children»	(London mono)
Lp	<b>The Rolling Stones</b>	«Aftermath»	(London mono)
Lp	<b>The Shadows</b>	«Sounds Of The Shadows»	(Capitol 6000 stereo)
Lp	<b>The Yardbirds</b>	«Having A Rave Up»	(Capitol 6000 stereo)
Lp	<b>The Yardbirds</b>	«Over, Under, Sideways, Down»	(Capitol 6000 stereo)
Lp	<b>*Peter And Gordon</b>	«Woman»	(Capitol stereo)

Lp	<b>Pink Floyd</b>	«Piper At The Gates Of Dawn»	(Capitol 6000 stereo)
Lp	<b>Gordon Lightfoot</b>	«Lightfoot»	(Compo / United Artists)
Lp	<b>Lovin Spoonful</b>	«Daydream»	(Quality / Kama Sutra)
Lp	<b>Sopwith Camel</b>	«Same»	(Quality / Kama Sutra)

Some time during 1967, the Capitol Record Club moved to 6260 Viscount Road in Malton (a northern suburb of Toronto) and began to issue a larger format colour catalogue. I have the Christmas 1967 colour catalogue which includes some The Beatles, Beach Boys, Traffic, etc. The pop section had been expanded significantly by this time.

In late 1967, we began purchasing pop records from these clubs on a less frequent basis as there was probably just too much happening in the world of stereo Lp recordings to bother waiting weeks for a record to arrive from a club ! We had access to the great record stores in Ottawa (Treble Clef, Sherman's, etc.). Large department stores were also retailing records as well (Sears, Towers, Simpsons, Freimans, Miracle Mart, etc.).

SOME OF THE ALBUMS WE PURCHASED IN OTTAWA AT THE END OF 1967:

Lp	<b>The Beatles</b>	«Magical Mystery Tour»	(mono - USA Capitol copy)
Lp	<b>The Rolling Stones</b>	«Their Satanic Majesties Request»	(stereo - USA London copy)
Lp	<b>The Jimi Hendrix Experience</b>	«Are You Experienced ?»	(stereo - Canadian Reprise copy)

The record clubs in Canada went «underground» in the late 1960s and early 1970s and offered great sign-up deals on «album rock» to the teen market. Groups like Led Zeppelin, Three Dog Night, Steppenwolf, Deep Purple, Cream, etc. were the flavour of the day in the «post Beatles» era.